TRU TeamWorks

July 28, 2010

WIPP Quick Facts
(As of 7-27-10)

8,774
Shipments received since opening
(8,382 CH and 392 RH)

69,184
Cubic meters of waste disposed
(68,987 CH and 197 RH)

134,987
Containers disposed in the underground
(134,600 CH and 387 RH)

CBFO Deputy Manager Vernon Daub retires

CBFO Deputy Manager Vernon Daub

Vernon Daub is parting ways with the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant – and this time he means it.

The Department of Energy's (DOE) Carlsbad Field Office (CBFO) deputy manager is retiring after spending 18 years assisting with the WIPP project. His lengthy career includes two different stops at WIPP, during which he served three separate stints as deputy manager and spent five years as the senior manager for the CBFO Technical Assistance Contractor (CTAC).

After retirement, Daub said he and his wife, Betty, plan to take a trip to Southern Indiana to research family history. In addition to tracing their roots, the Daubs will visit family and help out with needed repairs.

The trip will take anywhere from four to six weeks. The next phase of his retirement is still in its planning stages.

"When I get back, I'll plan the rest of the stuff out," Daub said. "We plan to do a lot of work on remodeling our own house. It was built in 1892."

Daub may need at least a few weeks to fully decompress from a storied career in nuclear administration.

He started with the federal government in 1975, when he worked for the Department of Defense in Texarkana, Texas.

But he was really interested in helping a program get off the ground, and he said he was intrigued by a job opening in 1987 seeking an experimental engineer at the WIPP site.

"I was looking for a chance to go somewhere where I could really help," he said.

Daub worked on the WIPP project, the first time around, from 1987 to 1995. Before he left, he served in numerous positions, including WIPP transportation manager, testing and operations manager and deputy manager.

"It was an exciting time," he said. "We were extremely busy and there were a lot of folks pulling the rope in the same direction."

But there were also some big roadblocks, as Daub and other WIPP employees hoped WIPP would be receiving waste by 1988 and then again 1991.

Some major improvements were made during the time period that Daub said resulted in WIPP's ultimate success. Wendell Weart led Sandia's effort to provide the right science to help open WIPP. But when George Dials took over as the DOE manager, his leadership along with Secretary Hazel O'Leary's support made the difference, for example, Dials was able to change policy so WIPP could report directly to DOE headquarters. Former State Senator Louis Whitlock's political acumen, along with the city fathers' support was another "key in getting it done," Daub noted.

Daub said he left WIPP in 1995 because he was interested in getting some experience in private industry. He spent three years in Fernald, Ohio, as a manager before transferring to the Hanford facility in Washington State. He left Hanford the following year for a position with Waste Control Specialists in Andrews, Texas.

"I really missed the Southwest," Daub explained.

The following year, Daub joined Portage Environmental, where he served as senior manager for WIPP's CTAC contract from November 2000 to July 2005. He then returned to the DOE as assistant manager for operations. Daub was promoted back to deputy manager when Lloyd Piper retired in 2007.

"The constant was the dedication of people here," he said. "It's something I've really come to appreciate as the project went on – the dedication and focus."

Daub said his recent role has been to tackle CBFO's administrative needs. "My focus has been getting staff back up, and getting everything to function like an organization," he said.

CBFO Manager Dave Moody presents Daub with a special service award plaque at Daub's retirement ceremony.

While Daub has been present during most of WIPP's key milestones, he wasn't around when the project received its first waste shipment in 1999. He was in Andrews, Texas, when news reports noted that WIPP may finally receive its first shipment of waste.

"There had been so many false alarms that I didn't believe it, so I didn't show up," he noted with a laugh.

However, he was thrilled to be present when the first shipment of remote-handled waste arrived at WIPP in 2007.

"That was a big deal," Daub said. "That was another major milestone that wasn't easy. A lot of good people worked hard on that process. It takes so many players to make things happen and continue to happen."

Although Vernon will be gone, the Daub name will still be around WIPP as his son, Zip, and daughter-in-law Loni, both work for WIPP's IT Department.

Daub said he believes WIPP is a place to build a career, and he hopes that the project will continue to attract dedicated individuals.

"I worry that people will forget their history and working here will just become a job," he said. "That's not how it is now, but people need to make sure they don't ever forget their history.

Portage awarded CTAC contract

The Carlsbad Field Office Technical Assistance Contract (CTAC) was awarded to Portage Inc. earlier this month. This is the second time that Portage has received the contract.

Portage Inc. is a small disadvantaged company based in Idaho Falls, Idaho, committed to the delivery of innovative and cost effective engineering and technical services. Portage provides engineering, environmental remediation and other technical services to Department of Energy facilities around the country, including Los Alamos National Laboratory.

' Portage will provide the technical oversight for the Carlsbad Field Office which includes environmental and regulatory support, National Transuranic Program technical support, American Reinvestment and Recovery Act support and operations oversight support, as well as many other project support needs.

In Memoriam
Wally Marshall

We are saddened to inform that former URS Washington TRU Solutions employee Wally Marshall recently passed away this month. Wally was a key member of WTS' Human Resources Department for 22 years.

He loved sports and was an official New Mexico high school referee for soccer and basketball. He also coached Carlsbad Youth Soccer and Carlsbad Boys and Girls Club basketball teams.

WIPP's success story continues to draw an international crowd

Nine International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) representatives from as many countries toured the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP) June 19 as part of a workshop hosted by Sandia National Laboratories (SNL) in Albuquerque. The IAEA is the world's intergovernmental forum for scientific and technical co-operation in the nuclear field.

The visit to WIPP was an introductory field trip for the course "Advanced Conceptual and Numerical Methods for Modeling Subsurface Processes Regarding Nuclear Waste Repository Systems," which took place June 18-26, with the remainder of the instruction held in Albuquerque.

Member of the IAEA toured the WIPP underground as part of a nuclear education workshop hosted by Sandia National Laboratory.

The Department of Energy's (DOE) Carlsbad Field Office (CBFO) hosted the WIPP visit. CBFO Chief Scientist Roger Nelson provided the technical overviews during a tour of the surface and underground facilities.

Sandia, as the Science Advisor for WIPP, was asked to provide educational courses for arising nuclear nations at the request of IAEA and the DOE. The special week-long course included in-depth treatment of models that are used to represent the safety assessment of repositories. Nuclear Energy Programs Line of Business Director Andrew Orrell and Dr. Frank Hansen served as Sandia's hosts.

"These courses are important to promoting international outreach, good will and technical information," Hansen said. "The DOE is dedicated to international programs, and the IAEA courses represent a component of the international program strategy. DOE has asked Sandia to provide the technical course content because of Sandia's extensive repository experience."

The IAEA established a training program under its Technical Corporation Program beginning in 2003. The objective of the program is to transfer knowledge and technology from member states with advanced research and development programs in underground research facilities by training specialists from participants with less developed repository programs.

High-"Lighting" WIPP's green energy

Flipping a light switch is usually done pretty easily, but when it came to the lighting system at the WIPP site, installing the most energy and cost efficient system was not as simple.

WIPP uses a lighting system called induction lighting, and it is the first facility of its kind to use and install this unique and energy efficient system.

Induction lighting is a technology system that makes phosphors glow without using electrodes. That may not sound too exciting, but think about it this way, its lighting competitors, high-pressure sodium (HPS) and metal-halide (MH), can be depleted in a span of 20-30,000 hours due to burned out electrodes. Induction lighting, with no electrodes, is cool to the touch and has a shelf life of approximately 100,000 hours.

James Hedin, a senior engineer at WIPP, said that WIPP first tested the Phillips and Sylvania induction lighting product in the TRUPACT-II Maintenance Facility in 1994. After a successful test, WIPP began putting up additional lighting at the site. He said he would like to have all outside and low and high-bay lighting around the site changed to induction.

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"A significant amount of the lighting load at the site is induction lighting," he said. "We use this technology around the perimeter of the site and also in the CH and RH bays."

This lighting system not only has advantages in high usage areas, but it provides an enormous benefit to rooms on-site that are moderately used. With HPS or MH lighting, it would take anywhere from five to ten minutes for lights to fully turn on. Lights in these areas were therefore left on at all times in case of an emergency situation.

Those moderately-used rooms were switched to induction lighting because of the "Instant-on" feature they provide in which there is no time for the light to warm up and begin working. This allowed those rooms to have the lights turned off unless in use. The change resulted in a 94 percent reduction of power use in those areas.

Hedin has been working with induction lighting for a number of years now and said he has become a go-to-guy when it comes to information about the lighting system.

"I have fielded calls about it from people all over the country," he said. "I even recently got a call from Atlanta's Hartsfield-Jackson Airport about helping them with installation of induction lighting in a new wing of the airport."